

# Lyme Public Hall Newsletter



*The Lyme Public Hall Association, Inc.*

*Vol. 7, No. 1 Spring 2008*

## In Memoriam

Since our last newsletter in Spring 2007, Lyme lost three beloved people, all former Lyme Public Hall board members who also served as president of the Lyme Public Hall. They will be greatly missed.

### Eleanor O'Connell

*Thank-you Eleanor for all you did, so quietly and with a generous heart.*

In loving tribute, volunteers from many of the charitable organizations in Lyme came together at the Lyme Public Hall to provide a beautiful memorial reception for Eleanor O'Connell who died suddenly May 7, 2007 on her 82nd birthday. Eleanor served in all aspects of the Lyme Public Hall Board of Directors for twenty very productive and supportive years, nine of them as president. During this time, she was a tireless community volunteer, helping in a remarkable number of organizations in the Lyme region. Some of the organizations that benefited from her helping hand included the Lyme Grange, the Senior Center, Lyme Fire Department Auxiliary, Lyme Congregational Church, and Literacy Volunteers of Southeastern CT. She was selflessly active in volunteer activities right up to her death, working at the Lyme Church rummage sale the week before and, on the morning of May 7, helping a client with Literacy Volunteers of Southeastern CT.



### Elizabeth Huey Putnam

*She was the keeper of the stories. She felt the need to preserve the history she knew and pass it on to the generations to follow.*

Elizabeth Putnam, life-long resident of Lyme, died on July

17, 2007 at the age of 94. She was the ninth generation to live in the area of Lyme called Brockway's Ferry. Elizabeth was an informal historical resource for many townspeople and visitors over the years. In her book, *Brockway's Ferry, A History and a Memoir*, she tells of the history of the people of Lyme: self-sufficient, capable, and industrious who made use of the natural resources that were available to them and used their ingenuity and hands to carve out a community. When the fire department vacated the town-owned Lyme Public Hall building in 1985, Elizabeth, who remembered attending dances there in her youth, spearheaded the campaign to re-create the Lyme Public Hall Association. She dreamed of restoring the building as a community center as well as the home for a local history archive for the appreciation and preservation of the unique history and culture of the town of Lyme. She remained committed to the Hall for the rest of her life, and was active either on the board or as a volunteer in the archives until she was 90. October 27, 2002, the date of Elizabeth's 90th birthday tribute hosted by the Hall, was proclaimed "Elizabeth Putnam Day" by the Lyme Board of Selectmen in part because she "has shown great human spirit, been understanding, and been an example to all residents of Lyme."



### Hiram Percy Maxim II

*Hiram was a real catalyst in awakening interest and concern for "historical Lyme".*

Many of the historic houses in Lyme display oval plaques with the date they were built and the name of the first owner, evidence of the legacy of Hiram P. Maxim II, town historian

## *In Appreciation*

As a gift to town historian Hiram Maxim in appreciation for his dedication to the Hall and his undertaking to restore town cemeteries that have fallen derelict, board members joined forces, on Saturday, September 22, with spouses and friends to donate time and labor towards the maintenance of Lord Cemetery on Hamburg Road across the road from the former Bill Hill one room school house. Weed whacking, raking, stone wall tidying, and rubbish removal were accomplished. Participants included: Bill and Diana Boehning, Ann Brubaker, Betsy and Walt Buch, Tom Davies, Sara and Bill Denow, Jerry Ehlen, Gary Jenkins, George House, Wendy Hill, Parker Lord, Marilyn Wilkins, Andrea and Tom Wing.



from 1995 until his death from cancer on January 12, 2008, at the age of 72. As town historian, Hiram researched the ownership history of over 70 of Lyme's older homes. When Hiram volunteered to be the historian, it was up to him to define the position and fund it for the most part. He worked to restore derelict cemeteries, and enhanced Lyme's award winning annual town reports with historical themes and photographs. He created the "Lyme Heritage News", a periodical newsletter full of history and interesting stories about the people of Lyme, which was mailed to all residents. In May 2007, the Lyme Public Hall hosted a signing by Hiram of a book compilation of these newsletters from 1995-2006. As part of the event, the Hall honored him for his generosity, encouragement, and support as our friend and colleague in historic preservation. As a past member and president of the Lyme Public Hall Board of Directors, he was influential in the creation of the local history archives. Despite his illness, he continued to serve Lyme until just before his death, sending out his last "Lyme Heritage News" newsletter in December 2007. His papers will be preserved in the local history archives.



*Hiram Maxim at Lord Cemetery in September, 2007.*

The Lyme Public Hall Association acknowledges with gratitude Hiram Maxim's generous bequest from his estate.

### **Who to contact:**

Membership: Sara Denow, 434-1929, sdenow@comcast.net  
Archives: Carolyn Bacdayan, 434-9292, acbacdayan@sbcglobal.net  
Newsletter: Ann Brubaker, 434-0012, abru@comcast.net  
Programs: Wendy Hill, 434-2961, hillwendy@sbcglobal.net

Rentals: Barabara Gustafson, 434-2635  
Bequests & Donations: Andrea Wing, 434-5628,  
wing64@comcast.net  
Newsletter layout: Lisa Reneson, Two Sisters Design

Membership in the Lyme Public Hall Association is open to anyone with an interest in the Lyme community. The Association receives no town funding and is supported through tax deductible membership fees, donations, and fund raisers. We invite you to join. The membership year runs from May 1-April 30. Select the support level that works best for you. Make checks payable to Lyme Public Hall Association, Inc and remit to P.O. Box 1056, Lyme, CT 06371.

Supporting - \$15

Subscribing - \$25

Contributing - \$50

Sustaining - \$100

Additional donations of cash, appreciated securities, or future bequests are also welcome. Thank you for your continued support. To join our e-mail list for notice of upcoming Lyme Public Hall events, send a request to: [lymepublichall@comcast.net](mailto:lymepublichall@comcast.net)

---

## Preserving Lyme's Agricultural Heritage

June 2nd, 2007 was a warm sunny Saturday in Lyme, perfect weather to kick off the Paint-Out for Tiffany Farms, sponsored by the Lyme Public Hall Association, Inc. (LPHA) and the Lyme Art Association. During the next 4 days, at least 78 artists from all over Connecticut set up their easels to work *en plein air* for an art sale to show their appreciation for the Tiffany's stewardship of this beautiful farm. In all, 135 artists participated in the Art Sale and Benefit, which was held at the Lyme Public Hall June 8 and 9. The Benefit, organized by Roger Clements, Angie Falstrom, Wendolyn Hill, and Tina West, with the help of many volunteers, was able to significantly contribute to the preservation of the historic dairy farm. The Tiffany family sent hundreds of letters expressing their deepest gratitude to everyone that contributed their time, talent, and funds to help the farm.

Today Jack Tiffany reports that, in large part because of community efforts, the financial condition of the family farm has improved dramatically since his talk at the Lyme Public Hall in 2006 when he expressed concern about being able to operate beyond 2007. For most of the dairy farmers in the Northeast, 2006 was a disaster. Skyrocketing expenses exceeded the income from milk, which was limited by a low wholesale price set by the federal government. The community of Lyme and our neighbors, including Congressman Joe Courtney, State Representative Marilyn Guiliano, and State Senator Eileen Daily, responded overwhelmingly to show how much they value Tiffany Farms and all that it represents.

An informal consortium was formed of the LPHA, the Lyme Land Conservation Trust, and others in support of Lyme's plan for conservation and development, which seeks to preserve our agricultural heritage in order to benefit all residents. This group raised awareness of the farm's dilemma and helped coordinate fundraising. Several private donations were received at the end of 2006. In June 2007, in addition to the Paint-Out, the farm benefited from one-time emergency state funding to distressed dairy farms based on the milk production per farm during 2006. Letters to state officials signed by attendees at a LPHA program in March 2007 had supported this funding.

The money from these efforts and an increase in the wholesale milk price during 2007 have helped put Tiffany Farms back onto secure financial footing. Back taxes and bills were resolved. Donations supplemented insurance coverage to repair the barn and put up a new silo to replace the ones that had been destroyed by a storm. A much-needed new mowing machine was bought. Deferred maintenance has been taken care of. The increase in milk income has allowed the farm to "put some money away towards the next rainy day when prices are expected to drop". In addition, according to Jack's daughter Hannah, the pedigreed Holstein herd has been built back up. Instead of being forced to sell cows to the detriment of the milking herd to make money, they are now able to sell surplus cows when they need space in the barn. They will also be offering compost again in the spring. "We enjoy meeting all the local (and not so local!) gardeners who stop by the farm to get compost." says Hannah.

The Lyme Public Hall Association is committed to preserving the agricultural heritage of the town of Lyme. We support all local farming operations that provide benefit for the residents of the town of Lyme, such as Sankow's Beaver Brook Farm, Falls Brook Organic Farm, the Lyme Farmers Market and Ashlawn Farm Coffee.



*Artists painted views of Tiffany Farms during the Paint-Out last June. Organizers transformed the Public Hall and its basement, shown below, into an art gallery. Anna Marie and Bill Carpiniello helped support this project. PHOTO ABOVE COURTESY OF ETHEL FELTHAM.*

---

## Independence Day Exhibit 2007: “Milling Around in Lyme”

An important reason for creating exhibits such as the latest one about the mills of Lyme and Hadlyme is to demonstrate the value of systematically collecting materials about Lyme in order to tell the stories and history of our town. Many of the visitors to this exhibit last July were intrigued by a map showing the location of more than thirty mills, mostly water-powered, that operated in Lyme and Hadlyme between the 17th and 20th centuries—lumber, grain, shingle, cider, cloth fulling, birch and witch hazel crushing and more. The information for the exhibit map and much of the exhibit came from sources in the archives, donated over the past ten years, such as personal memoirs, maps, old photographs, oral history interviews, news clippings, and family genealogies. By extension, an exhibit like this also becomes a part of the archive collection, including the background research done, the displays produced, and new materials created such as the photographs taken specifically for the exhibit documenting the surviving foundations, dams, sluices, and earthworks.

Another reason for creating exhibits is to offer information which may be unfamiliar to town residents or which may put old information in a new perspective. For instance, aside from the sheer number of mills identified, the exhibit was bold testimony to the combined significance of Falls River, Eight Mile River, Hemlock Valley Brook, Beaver Brook and Whalebone Creek to the life and development of Lyme and Hadlyme right up into the 20th century. In this day of nuclear, gas and electrical power and with the necessities of life coming from continents away, the contribution of water-power through the 19th century has to be appreciated.

The exhibits are always enlivened by the loan of relevant material and artifacts from local residents. In the mill exhibit, grateful appreciation is extended to the following for their special assistance or generous loan of artifacts and photos: Kelvin W. Cole, Lou Condron, Toni Condron, Karen Dahl, Roger Dill, Tony Donovan, Charles Farrow, Ethel Feltham, Sue Hessel, Suzanne Sankow, Douglas Nielson, and Jack Tiffany. Carolyn Bacdayan, archivist, curated the exhibit.



*This view of the Red Mill by artist Willard Scott Clime shows the sluice carrying water power to the mill and its water wheel.*



*Typical architectural features of old mill buildings can be seen in the “Red Mill” (1784), on the Eight Mile River, now a residence: multi-storey with large open work spaces (for grain milling, sawing, spinning or weaving), exterior hoist to storage lofts for raw material or finished goods, and the bell to announce the working hours.*



*“Sharpening the Saw” Amos Congdon (1899-1994) PHOTO BY TONY DONOVAN*

*Photographic studies of the Congdon Lumber Mill on Beaver Brook Road were included in the exhibit. Photographer Tony Donovan said, “Since I first saw Amos Congdon I worked to make his picture. He seemed like a spirit to me—the spirit of the trees.”*

---

## The Local History Archive at Ten Years

*There was a dream: "To collect and preserve documents, artifacts and other materials that would memorialize Lyme life and history and be accessible for research". It was an important but deferred part of the initiative undertaken by several Lyme citizens in 1985 to re-establish the Lyme Public Hall Association*

In 1996 an exploratory committee of the board composed of Jean Lee, Hiram Maxim, Eleanor O'Connell, Elizabeth Putnam, Patricia Stark and Carolyn Bacdayan, chair, was formed to investigate what would be needed to create an archive of local history for Lyme. After visits to regional museums and archives, the committee concluded that the project was not only feasible but that there was an urgency to begin work because of the number of elderly individuals with personal memories and family memorabilia. This situation together with a growing interest in the town's history pointed clearly to the value of a secure and professionally operated local history archive.

Patricia Stark, Lyme resident and career archivist, and Carolyn Bacdayan developed a mission statement and guidelines for what would be collected as well as a first set of operating policies. A bequest from the late Verne Hall, a former board member, helped fund archival shelving, processing and storage supplies, and creation of a climate controlled collection storage room.

On June 14, 1998, the local history archive was dedicated in a public ceremony at the Hall with Mark Jones, the Connecticut State Archivist, as guest speaker. An exhibit about Lyme's one room schools was presented, the first of many using archival materials. In response to publicity, memoirs, letters, photographs, ledgers and more started to flow in to be added to our first donation, Elizabeth Putnam's collection of newspaper articles about Lyme covering the 20th century.

In these ten years 133 donors have given more than 4,000 items, now archived in 46 collections. There are collections specific to local organizations including churches, the Lyme Grange and Hamburg Fair and collections that focus on particular families or an individual. Donations from former town historian Elizabeth Plimpton, genealogical research from William Beebe, and the Putnam gift make up the largest collections. The manuscript and photograph collections are also sizable. A computerized data base of all items in the collections, searchable by subject, is maintained and available to researchers.

Since 1998, Carolyn Bacdayan has served as the volunteer archivist. Warner Lord, Madison archivist, was an especially helpful mentor during the start up. The challenging job of processing archival materials could not have been done without help over extended periods of time from Lyme residents Hilde Reichenbach, Doad Jewett, Mary Catherwood, Betsy Buch, Wendy Hill, Sara Denow and the late Eleanor O'Connell and Elizabeth Putnam. Thanks to all who have donated materials, funds, time, professionalism and their enthusiasm. With future support, the archives will continue to be an important community asset.

The archives at the Lyme Public Hall is open to the public by appointment. If you are interested in using the archives, donating materials or funds, or volunteering time or skill, contact Carolyn Bacdayan at ( 860) 434-9292.

### A Volunteer Project

One on-going archives project is the transcription of oral history interviews of Lyme residents which were done in recent years, more than forty by the late Eleanor O'Connell. Diana Boehning, a newcomer to Lyme, is making progress with the transcribing, thanks to Mary Ann Kistner's donation of professional quality transcription equipment. The following is from a 1997 interview with Jenny Stark:

**Interviewer:** Do you remember this Beaver Brook, Pleasant Valley area was supposed to be famous for the artists? Do you remember any of them, talking to them, how did you relate to them?

**JS:** *One summer, 1924 or 1925, my sister Marion and Charles and I got dinners for artists and they just came to dinner if they wanted to. It was like a restaurant. We had noon day meals. Robert Vonnob was a very noted one here and abroad, and George Breustle and Flora Buccini, Jim McManus, Paul Saling, Vezin, but can't think of his first name, and Alphaeus Cole, who lived to 90, but he came a little later.*

---

## How Does Our Garden Grow?

In June 2004 the Lyme Garden Club, following a very successful Garden Tour of Lyme, divided the proceeds among town charities. Happily, the Lyme Public Hall was among those selected. The gift has been used to create a garden on the embankments in front of the Hall, a three year project which was completed in the spring and summer of 2007.

### Thanks go to:

- The Lyme Garden Club for their gift which started our gardening Odyssey
- Former board member Melodee Leonardo for getting the project underway
- Bub Plimpton who had a hunch about that septic tank

- Sarah McCracken, landscape architect, who designed the gardens including the new stone stairs, selected the plant material and coached all the planters and mulchers Special thanks, Sarah, for this gift to our community
- Marc Evankow who built the wonderful stone stairs
- Christopher Anderson, a fellow town resident and his associate Laurie Nabor, both of Garden Iron of Essex, who generously donated the handsome handrail that they designed and installed
- Members of the board and their recruits who included Howard Beers, Bill Denow, Jim Matschulat, James S. Matschulat, Donald O'Connell, Tom Wing

With continuing careful care our garden should provide a fragrant and eye-catching welcome to Hall visitors for many years to come.

### MORE IMPROVEMENTS TO COME IN 2008

Now that the garden project is done, the board of the Public Hall has turned its attention to much needed maintenance of the building itself. The garage doors have been repainted, greatly improving the appearance of the building. Next the stone facing on the front of the building will be receiving major but necessary repairs. The Lyme Public Hall Association has sole responsibility for the care and up keep of the building and grounds.

## Chowder Dinner—November 2007

Who would have thought that the prelude to winter could be such fun? The Annual Chowder Dinner was a good excuse to gather together with friends and neighbors and just enjoy good home cooking. Marilyn Wilkins' cole slaw was the hit of the evening and everyone feasted on Bill Denow's sweetest corn chowder this side of the Connecticut River and Janis Livingston's made from scratch clam chowder. It was no surprise that more than 150 people had a marvelous time. By popular demand, we look forward to November 14, 2008 for another festive treat. Thanks go to Vanderbrooke Bakers & Caterers, Connecticut Shellfish Company, Tiffany Farms and Ashlawn Farm Coffee for their support.

### *Public Hall Cole Slaw*

- 16 oz cabbage, shredded (can be a packaged mix)
- 8 oz red cabbage, shredded
- 1 cup sliced almonds
- 1 cup sunflower seeds
- 2 pkgs ramen noodles, crushed (Oriental or Beef flavor)

*Serves 15 or more.*

### **DRESSING**

- 1 cup oil
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup cider vinegar
- seasonings from ramen noodle packages

Add dressing to cabbage/ramen mix and marinate overnight.

---

## Upcoming programs

---

These are some of the future programs to look forward to at the Lyme Public Hall. For info, call Wendy Hill at 434-2961

### **Earth Day Weekend, April 19 and 20**

#### ***Lyme Spring Clean-Sweep***

Town-wide roadside clean-up. Free trash bags are available at H.L.Reynold's (Jane's) Store and the Hadlyme Country Store. On Monday, Town of Lyme picks up bags left on side of road.

### **Saturday, April 26, rain date April 27**

#### ***Lyme Public Hall Members' Day at Bushnell Farm***

1445 Boston Post Road, Old Saybrook

This beautifully preserved 1678 colonial farm, a place that time forgot in the midst of strip malls in Old Saybrook, is rarely open to the public. Thanks to current owner Herb Clark, members of the Lyme Public Hall will have an opportunity to experience farm life in the 17th century. Detailed information will be mailed.

### **Saturday, May 17, 9 a.m. - 12 noon.**

#### ***Connecticut River Cruise and Brunch***

Aboard the *RiverQuest*, we will explore the area north of the East Haddam bridge, search for Venture Smith's homestead, and venture onto the Salmon River. Brunch and beverages provided. Reservations and prepayment are required: members, \$35, nonmembers \$40. The boat will leave from the Hamburg Cove Yacht Club, 13 Cove Road, Lyme at 9 a.m. Call Marilyn Wilkins at 434-1211 for reservations. Proceeds support the Lyme Public Hall's programs.

### **Thursday, May 29, 7 p.m.**

#### ***Working the Land: The Story of Connecticut's Agriculture See details page 8***

### **Thursday, June 12, 6 p.m.**

#### ***Annual Meeting & Potluck Dinner***

Special Program to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Local History Archives. Potluck Dinner begins at 6:00 PM followed by the program. Bring a main course, salad or dessert to share. Beverages, plates and utensils will be provided. The event is open to the public.

### **Saturday, June 21, 11 a.m.**

#### ***Tiffany Farms Tour***

Learn how milk cows are raised from birth to productive years and how milk is processed. See pedigreed Holsteins. Call Marilyn Wilkins at 434-1211 for reservations. Raindate: June 28

### **July 4th, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.**

#### **and July 5th & 6th, 1-5 p.m.**

#### ***Treasures in the Archives***

This year's exhibit features items selected to illustrate the diversity of materials donated over the past ten years. The exhibit is free and open to the public.

### **Saturday, August 2, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

#### ***Annual Lyme Public Hall Tag Sale***

A bargain hunter's delight! Set aside your donations for this fundraiser: furniture, tools, small appliances, house wares, linen, toys, decorative, and gift items.

### **Sunday, September 7, 2 p.m.**

#### ***An Overview of Lyme's Cemeteries—A Talk and Walk***

Selectman and Lyme history enthusiast Parker Lord, will give a talk with slides with an emphasis on restoration and preservation. After the talk, join Parker for a guided walk through the North Lyme Cemetery.

### **Sunday, September 28, 2 p.m.**

#### ***Complicity—How the North Profited, Promoted and Prolonged Slavery***

Anne Farrow, author and journalist, will present highlights of the book she co-authored. She was editor and writer for the Hartford Courant for twenty years and is now managing editor of a project to build a website for ECHO-Encyclopedia of Connecticut History Online. Books will be available for purchase.

### **Late Fall-TBA**

#### ***A Workshop On Preserving Family Treasures and Papers.***

Lyme Public Hall archivist Carolyn Bacdayan will share archival techniques to preserve your family photographs and papers.

### **Thursday, October 23, 7 p.m.**

#### ***Milling Around Some More—Lower Connecticut Valley Water Mills***

Charles Farrow, East Haddam Historical Society President, will present a talk with slides of historic photos and what remains today of mills powered by water in Hemlock Valley Brook and Whalebone Cove.

### **Friday, November 14, 5-7 p.m.**

#### ***The Lyme Public Hall's Traditional Chowder Dinner***

Join us for this delicious Hall tradition, featuring home-made corn chowder, clam chowder, cole slaw, and apple crisp. For information, call Janis Livingston at 434-8566. See related article page 6.

